



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2005-26

Wednesday, February 9, 2005

CONTACT: Joseph Donovan, Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

Investment in SAGE to bring brighter future for children

Governor's 2005-07 proposed budget to add \$44.1 million to class-size reduction program aid

MADISON—The governor's proposed 2005-07 education budget will increase aid for the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program and makes it possible for new schools to join the popular class-size reduction program.

"Gov. Jim Doyle is making a sound investment in Wisconsin's children that supports my SAGE budget proposals and ensures a brighter future for our youngest students," said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster.

Currently, districts receive \$2,000 per low-income student enrolled in the SAGE program. Under the governor's proposed budget, aid would increase to \$2,250 in 2005-06, and in 2006-07, the reimbursement per low-income student would be \$2,500. The total increase to the categorical aid appropriation will be \$44.1 million over two years, the largest increase in categorical aid for education in the governor's proposed budget.

"SAGE is targeted to students when they are most in need," Burmaster commented. "In the early grades, students discover what it means to be in school and how to learn. Studies of quality class-size reduction efforts show improved academic achievement for students with smaller student-to-teacher ratios that are sustained through middle school and high school."

Many schools cite SAGE as a reason for their success. Castle Rock Elementary School in the Adams-Friendship School District reports, "Low class size, made possible through SAGE, allows our K-3 teachers to work with small groups of students at their instructional levels." In Milwaukee's Zablocki Elementary School, SAGE allows more individual tutoring, small-group work, and calmer classrooms, providing children with more contact and attention from teachers, which has greatly improved the students' academic, social, and emotional growth.

(more)

Both schools were named New Wisconsin Promise Schools of Recognition for 2004-05 for being among the highest poverty schools in the state based on free and reduced-price school lunch data and having student achievement that is above average for the state in both reading and mathematics. Sixty-nine of the 84 elementary schools cited for New Wisconsin Promise honors participate in the SAGE program.

“SAGE makes a difference,” Burmaster said. “Investing in education, especially the education of our K-3 students through SAGE, contributes to the future of our democracy and ensures Wisconsin’s long-term economic security. The governor’s budget proposals for SAGE support our efforts to provide a quality education for every child and close the achievement gap.”

SAGE began with 30 schools in 21 school districts implementing the program in kindergarten and first grade in 1996 and expanded through third grade by 1998-99. The program expanded in the 2000-01 school year but has been closed to new contracts since. The budget proposal for SAGE would allow approximately 10 additional schools to join in a fourth wave of SAGE contracts during 2006-07.

Currently, 227 districts and 524 schools participate in the SAGE program. SAGE contracts require schools to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio in classrooms to 15:1 in grades kindergarten through 3. Additionally, schools are required to be open extended hours, creating “lighted schoolhouses,” and collaborate with the community in educational, recreational, and social service activities; develop rigorous academic curricula; and implement plans for staff development and professional accountability.

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NOTES: For additional information about the Department of Public Instruction’s SAGE program, visit < <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/oea/sage/index.html> >. A list of schools that earned New Wisconsin Promise School of Recognition honors is available at < http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/eis/pdf/dpi2004_120.pdf >.